



WISCONSIN WELLHEAD PROTECTION NEWS

Fall 2005



HAPPY FALL!

I hope everything is going well for you. In this issue we congratulate the communities who have developed wellhead protection (WHP) plans in the past several months. You can also read about the Wisconsin Rural Water Association's Source Water Protection effort, some tools to think about for protecting your water supply, new publications and an update on implementation of the new groundwater quantity law. Enjoy!

Dave Lindorff, Editor

CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations are in order for a number of municipal systems who are or have been involved in wellhead protection (WHP) planning to protect their water supply wells. Adell, Argyle, Bagley, Hammond, Lancaster, Oliver, Osceola, Paddock Lake, Pigeon Falls, Seneca Sanitary District 1 and Whitehall have worked with or are working with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) or Wisconsin Rural Water Association (WRWA) staff on wellhead protection plans, ordinances or both. In addition, Patrick Harrington of WRWA has completed source water protection plans for all public water supplies in western Burnett County and the Montello area. You are all commended for being proactive in protecting your water supply.

Communities which have developed wellhead protection plans for new wells since the last newsletter include Algoma Sanitary District, Florence, Mosinee and Waterford. Hats off to these communities as well for recognizing the importance of wellhead protection. Good work!

There are now over 270 communities which, according to WDNR records, have adopted a plan for at least one of their wells. Check out the list at dnr.wi.gov/org/water/dwg/gw/whp/communities.pdf.

If you would like assistance from the WDNR in getting started, contact me by phone (877-268-9355 toll free), by fax (608-267-7650), by email (david.lindorff@dnr.state.wi.us) or regular mail (Wisconsin DNR, P. O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707-7921).

You can also contact Ed Morse, Groundwater Specialist for the WRWA, at 920-648-7578 or edmorse@charter.net for assistance with a plan for your community. In addition, Patrick Harrington of WRWA is available to work with local entities on a multi-jurisdictional level to protect public water supplies and to promote coordinated efforts to protect groundwater and surface water (see article on page 2). Patrick can be reached by calling 715-498-0383 or emailing him at wrwa-sourcewater@sbcglobal.net.

Another option is to contact an engineering firm or a professional hydrogeologist to help develop a wellhead protection plan. Check your yellow pages for engineering firms or hydrogeologists in your area.



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SOURCE WATER PROTECTION PLANNING BY WRWA

As noted above, Patrick Harrington has been working on a broader scale than a community's wellhead protection plan to encourage cooperative multi-jurisdictional protection efforts at the basin or local scale. Patrick has been working as a Source Water Protection Specialist since the summer of 2004. Patrick has now completed a plan for all the public water supplies in western Burnett County as well as a plan for the Montello area. This includes not only municipal systems, but other public systems like schools, restaurants, gas stations, campgrounds, etc. with their own groundwater supply.

As you can imagine, this provides a wonderful opportunity for public systems to work together to protect their water supply. Since public water systems are likely to draw water from the same aquifer, it just makes sense to work together to protect the water supply for the future. Now that source water assessments have been completed by the WDNR for all public systems, the information is available to help develop a protection plan. For more information, see Patrick's contact information on the front page.

SOURCE WATER - ASSESSMENTS TO PROTECTION

As noted in the last newsletter, source water assessments have been completed for all 11,000 plus public water systems. Summaries of the assessments for all groundwater systems are on the WDNR's source water assessment website at dnr.wi.gov/org/water/dwg/swap/index.htm. All assessments for surface water systems are completed and available in their entirety at the above website.

If you have questions about source water assessments, contact Jeff Helmuth, WDNR Source Water Assessment Program Coordinator, at (608) 266-5234 or jeffrey.helmuth@dnr.state.wi.us. You can also visit the WDNR source water assessment website at the URL noted above.

Now the focus of the source water program is on protection. Each community has a wonderful opportunity to review its assessment and use that information to tailor a protection plan to meet its particular needs.

Much of the information that a community would need for a WHP plan is contained in their assessment. Each assessment contains the source water area delineated by the WDNR for each well, the known potential contaminant sources within the

source water area, and a discussion of the susceptibility (low, moderate or susceptible) of each well to contamination by six classes of contaminants. By reviewing the assessment, a community can identify which well or wells are most susceptible to contamination and consider ways that the well susceptibility might be reduced. The first priority would be a well that is "susceptible" to one or more contaminants. Wells "moderately susceptible" to one or more contaminants would be a lower priority.

The community can then decide how best to reduce the susceptibility of the most critical well or wells. Since each community is unique, the circumstances and potential solutions will be unique to that community. Each community is best able to decide how best to protect its own water supply.

There are any number of options that a community can consider, including developing and implementing an educational program, working with potential contaminant sources in the source water area, eliminating potential contaminant sources (see the two following articles), buying property, adopting a zoning ordinance and developing a contingency plan, to name a few.

The articles that follow offer some ideas for protecting your water supply. There is also a variety of information and resources available at the WDNR's WHP website at dnr.wi.gov/org/water/dwg/gw/wellhead.htm and the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) source water protection website at www.epa.gov/safewater/protect. If you'd like help with wellhead protection planning, see the contacts on the front page of this newsletter.

CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM IN WELLHEAD PROTECTION AREAS

One of the ways to reduce the threat of potential contaminant sources in WHP areas is to eliminate those potential sources. The federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a program designed to take agricultural cropland out of production. Farmers that use croplands that are both: 1) in a wellhead protection area and 2) up to 2000 feet from a municipal well could be eligible for cost-sharing and annual rental payments through the Farm Service Agency (FSA) to fund conversion of the land to conservation practices that would reduce the impact on the environment.

Farmers would sign a contract for a 10-15 year period, depending on the conservation practice being

installed. Besides an annual rental payment to the farmer, up to 50% of the cost of converting the land to a conservation practice may be reimbursed.

The WDNR has met with staff from the Farm Service Agency and WRWA to work out details for implementing this program in Wisconsin. To date, the WDNR has provided information to the FSA for 47 counties matching agricultural land and wellhead protection areas, primarily in the southern two-thirds of the state.

We hope this will become an opportunity for farmers to convert cropland to conservation practices that will be protective to the environment. If you think there is cropland within your WHP area, contact your county FSA office or Ed Morse of WRWA to follow through.

WELL ABANDONMENT

Other potential sources of contamination are unused wells that have not been properly abandoned. These wells can provide a direct pathway for contaminants like pesticides to enter the groundwater. Municipal water systems must require abandonment of all unused, unsafe or noncomplying private wells on properties they serve as outlined in s. NR 811.10, Wisconsin Administrative Code. Section NR 812.26, Wis. Adm. Code, governs proper abandonment of private wells. Rules for abandonment of community wells is specified in s. NR 811.17, Wis. Adm. Code.

See the WDNR publication “Answers to Your Questions on Well Abandonment” for information on properly abandoning wells. Print a copy at www.dnr.wi.gov/org/water/dwg/forms/wellabandonment.pdf or call the Bureau of Drinking Water and Groundwater at 608-266-0821. The WDNR also has a well abandonment video that’s available for \$4 by calling the same number.

SOURCE WATER PROTECTION HANDBOOK

In the Spring newsletter, I mentioned two recent publications from the American Water Works Association and the Trust for Public Land. One of them - “Protecting the Source” makes the case for land conservation and identifies practices to help communities control the land which is the source of its drinking water, either surface water or groundwater. This report can be downloaded at www.tpl.org/content_documents/protecting_the_source_04.pdf.

The other publication is “The Source Water Protection Handbook: Using Land Conservation to Protect Local Drinking Water”. I indicated that the handbook was available for \$25, but it is now available online. You can go to www.epa.gov/safewater/protect/features.html#trust and click on “Source Water Protection Handbook”. The handbook provides resources to help a community make the case for land conservation and also go about actually conserving those lands. How-to sections include: understanding your watershed, prioritizing land for protection, building strong partnerships, designing a comprehensive source protection plan, financing the conservation of land, protecting priority parcels and managing the land. It also includes case studies.

GROUNDWATER QUANTITY LAW UPDATE

There have been three developments regarding implementation of the 2004 groundwater quantity law (2003 Wisconsin Act 310) since the last newsletter. As of May 1, 2005, those planning to install a new water supply well must notify the WDNR before the well is drilled. A fee of \$500 must be paid for any new high capacity well (greater than 70 gallons/minute) and a \$50 fee paid for all other new wells.

The legislation required the appointment of a Groundwater Advisory Committee (GAC) to develop recommendations for managing water resources in two Groundwater Management Areas and to develop recommendations for implementing the law. The Committee was appointed this past spring and three meetings have been held. To keep track of the activities of the GAC, go to dnr.wi.gov/org/water/dwg/gac/index.htm.

The Governor requested five positions within the WDNR to implement the legislation and those positions were approved in the biennial budget. The WDNR will be working on developing responsibilities and hiring these positions over the next several months. Information will be available on the Bureau of Drinking Water and Groundwater website (dnr.wi.gov/org/water/dwg/index.htm) as the law is implemented.

For a more complete summary of the legislation, go to www.legis.state.wi.us/lc/act_memo/2003/act310-ab926.pdf. The text of Act 310 is at www.legis.state.wi.us/2003/data/acts/03Act310.pdf.

BETTER HOMES AND GROUNDWATER

Some of you may be familiar with the publication "Better Homes and Groundwater" originally produced a number of years ago to give people ideas for protecting groundwater both at home and work. The WDNR updated the document and reprinted it earlier this year. The publication contains suggestions for reducing the use of chemicals that could get into groundwater as well as conserving groundwater. You can download a copy at dnr.wi.gov/org/water/dwg/gw/bhgw.pdf or order paper copies from Dave Lindorff.

GROUNDWATER FESTIVAL FOR KIDS

Over 500 fifth and sixth graders learned about groundwater at the third annual Groundwater Festival May 6th in Eau Claire. Through a variety of hands-on activities, the students learned the importance of protecting groundwater. The 2006 Groundwater Festival will be held in Manitowoc next April 27th. Check the Wisconsin Groundwater Guardian website at www.uwsp.edu/cnr/gwguardian over the next few months to find more details and how schools can apply to attend. Applications will also be sent to schools within a reasonable traveling distance.

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The Wisconsin Wellhead Protection Newsletter is a publication of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' Bureau of Drinking Water and Groundwater. Its purpose is to provide current information on wellhead protection topics. It is published in the spring and fall and as needed.

Comments, questions, suggestions and articles are welcome and can be sent to: David Lindorff, Editor, Wisconsin Wellhead Protection Newsletter, Department of Natural Resources, P. O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707-7921
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The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provides equal opportunity in its employment, programs, services and functions under an Affirmative Action Plan. If you have any questions, please write to Equal Opportunity Office, Department of the Interior, Washington, D. C. 20240. This newsletter is available in an alternate format upon request. If interested, please contact David Lindorff, Editor.
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